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cover credit
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Todd Favela

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OFFICE HOURS Monday-Friday
8:30 am to 5:30 pm

ISSN 0744-0456. City Pages is published weekly by Star Tribune Media Company, LLC. City Pages is located at 800 1st St. N., Ste. 300, Minneapolis, MN 55401. City Pages is available free of charge, limited to one copy per reader. Additional copies of the current issue may be purchased at the City Pages office for \$1, payable in advance. No person may, without prior written permission of City Pages, take more than one copy of each City Pages weekly issue. Subscriptions are available for \$100 per year. Subscription orders must include check or money order payable to City Pages, and should be mailed to City Pages Subscriptions, 800 1st St. N., Ste. 300, Minneapolis, MN 55401. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Postmaster: Send address changes to City Pages, 800 1st St. N., Ste. 300, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

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TONY NELSON

THE STAT SHEET

100

Record number of women
running for the Minnesota House
this year

34%

Increase over the past 10 years
of Minnesota teachers who are
bailing on the profession

82%

Minnesota's high school
graduation rate, which ranks
35th in the nation

11%

Percentage of Amazon employees
who require food stamps
to supplement their wages

**"Why promote a policy that
empirically works at reducing abortions
and saves money at the same time?"**

Reader Patrick Solomon responds to "Donald Trump launches a systematic attack on access to birth control," at citypages.com.

RACCOON'S REVENGE

THE FAMED ST. PAUL RACCOON has given birth to a more pedestrian form of American wildlife: craven opportunists.

Minnesota Public Radio is selling T-shirts and tote bags featuring our hero's likeness. The National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum—yes, there is such a thing—is taking pre-orders on a toy version of His Greatness. Even Buffalo is trying to usurp the coon's glory by pitching its own tales involving alligators and peacocks, none of which can scale Uncle Randy's fishing shack, much less a 25-story building.

In response, the raccoon is rumored to have retained the prestigious law firm of 1-800-Ask-Gary, with plans to unleash a scorched-earth litigation campaign on everyone who dares trade on his fame.

POPULAR STORIES

AT CITYPAGES.COM

TARGET'S BABY DADDY

card scandal: Retailer issues a 'sorry if you were offended' apology

VINCE VAUGHN, arrested for DUI, rediscovered as a Minneapolis native

Minnesota couple lists dream **'TINY HOUSE NATION'** home on Craigslist

Charges: Woman raped near **AAMODT'S APPLE FARM** by owner's son

SUBWAY EMPLOYEE told she couldn't give 'over 100' (!) loaves of bread to charity

THE RIVER EXCREMENT

In Mower County, they're swimming with the feces

Last year, the Izaak Walton League and 40 volunteers tested the Cedar River for E. coli, a nasty bacterium found in animal waste.

Volunteers collected just shy of 500 samples, 70 percent of which had high levels of contamination.

The league then sent seven for DNA testing. Five contained swine DNA, and six contained cattle DNA. But all seven held human DNA. In other words, the river was soiled with human poop.

The league went to Mower County, asking for inspections of old septic tanks. It also wants failing tanks in Dobbins Creek, a popular recreation area, replaced by year's end.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency estimates there are about 25,000 septic tanks posing health risks statewide. That's a major improvement from a decade ago, when the figure was twice as high.

But Mower County only requires residents to check and upgrade tanks when

homes are sold or building permits sought, and replacements can cost up to \$20,000. At this rate, it would likely take another 20 years to cleanse the river excrement.

"We all want clean water, but we also want empathy for the 80-year-old woman living in a farmhouse who can't afford to replace a septic system," says Mower County Commissioner Tony Bennett.

The county could raise taxes to offset the costs, but soil and water conservation manager Justin Hanson doesn't think the board carries a "strong appetite" for that.

A few years ago, Mower received grant money from the Clean Water Fund to make visual inspections for the tell-tale signs of bubbling excrement. Replacing those problem tanks has been an ongoing struggle.

The Walton League's Don Arnosti knows they're trying, but he wants things sped up. Bottom line, he says, people have a right to human-poop-free rivers.



MOWER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mower County is reckoning with an E. coli problem. Sure, they need to clean up their septic tanks, but who's going to pay for it?

"It has been 46 years since it's been flat-out illegal to flush your toilet into the surface water," Arnosti says. "It's the county's responsibility to have up-to-date waste systems."

MPCA watershed manager Bill Thompson sees both sides of the argument. Yes, Mower has already made progress. And, yes, that progress could be accelerated. The

thing is, this isn't just a Mower County issue. You can find the same bacterial problems across southern Minnesota. The state is offering 10-year loans of up to \$14,000, but there's no inexpensive fix.

So while people can ask their government to guarantee clean water, they'll still have to convince their neighbors to pay for it. —HANNAH JONES

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Don in Duluth

Trump is no friend to the North Country

Sometimes metaphor, man, and myth arrive one right after the other.

This past weekend, a taconite ship ran aground in Duluth Harbor, nearly crashing right into the Canal Park seawall. The name of this ill-fated ship? *American Spirit*.

The symbolism was hard to miss, for, the same week, the Lake Superior port city was to receive another patriotic vessel on an ill-plotted course through ever-shallower waters. Ostensibly in support of GOP congressional candidate Pete Stauber, Donald Trump will hold a campaign event in Duluth tonight. It is, in fact, an event in support of Donald Trump, who will happily tell everyone how great things are (very great!) and who they should thank (you get one guess).

Buffer the bluster. Here are a half-dozen reasons why Trump is more foe than friend to that region and its people.

LABOR: Mines gave northern Minnesotans jobs, but it was unions that won wages to lift them out of poverty. The Trump administration is decidedly pro-CEO (see: his tax bill slashing the corporate income tax by 40 percent) and openly hostile to workers. In February 2017, Vice President Mike Pence met with Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to plot taking union-killing “right-to-work” laws national. Last fall, Trump’s Department of Labor snuffed out a union-led board to advise the feds on necessary safety measures for workers in the field. Because in Trump’s America, the only thing that deserves safety is profit margins.

ENVIRONMENT: These days, the North Country’s outdoors employs far more people than its mines. Trump, the ultimate indoorsman, trusts scientific “input” from Fox News, the businessmen who golf his courses, and, as it turns out, from anyone who gives his daughter a house. After the election, the Chilean billionaire owner of Antofagasta mining group bought a \$5.5 million house in Washington, D.C. and leased it to Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner. This spring, Trump’s Interior Department reinstated canceled leases for Twin Metals, Antofagasta’s proposed Minnesota copper-nickel mine. If acid backwash ruins the Boundary Waters, maybe Ivanka and Jared will show up with mops and sponges.

CANADA: Our neighbors to the north stubbornly refuse to admit to a “trade deficit”... which Trump, in a private meeting with Republican donors, admitted he simply made up. (There’s actually a \$2 billion surplus running the other way.) No matter; Trump wants to tax Canadian steel and aluminum and set off a tariff slap-fight. That’s especially bad news for Duluth, where about a third of port traffic is bound for Canada. Minnesota sends grain and taconite north, and in return, gets products Canada’s now threatening to tax right back. Among them: Canadian whiskey, including Fireball, Minnesota’s most-consumed hard liquor.

STEEL: Trump’s trade war certainly looks like old-fashioned patriotic protectionism. (Though some of the steel

we import from Canada comes from hundreds of millions’ worth of Minnesota iron exported to Canada; see how that works?) But be warned: The Trump Organization might not be first in line to buy American. Just a decade ago, Trump built a hotel in Las Vegas with Chinese steel, and outfitted another in Chicago with Chinese aluminum. The president’s cynical attempt to “save” American manufacturing is only necessary because financiers like him turned their backs on it to save money.

OPIOID INACTION: In St. Louis County, where the president’s visiting today, heroin and opioid overdose deaths more than doubled from 2011 to 2015, and most of the county’s 144 overdoses last year occurred in Duluth. Trump knows just what this crisis needs: a border wall, deportations, kicking people off Medicaid, and the death penalty for drug dealers, just a few of the ideas he floated in a rambling speech in March. Those, and “really great advertising,” which he swears would convince people never to try drugs in the first place. To Trump, addiction isn’t a public health crisis. It’s a marketing opportunity to prove “Just Say No” needed better posters.

THE ELITE’S ELITE: Northern Minnesotans were supposed to like Trump because he shot them straight and wasn’t a “D.C. insider,” like Hillary Clinton. They got something different all right. Gone is the petty corruption inherent in bureaucracy. In its place is something humble, hard-working



Mike Mullen

northern Minnesotans probably hate even more: Wall Street fat cats. His cabinet secretaries criss-cross the country in private jets and spend seven figures redecorating their offices. EPA Director Scott Pruitt hired his disgraced banker friend to turn “Superfund” environmental clean-up sites into a developers’ sweepstakes. Jared Kushner takes lunches with hedge fund billionaires, while Don Jr. and Ivanka strike business deals with China. Trump’s consumer “protection” board is standing up for payday lenders and Wall Street speculators. Meanwhile, the guy in charge keeps taking golf trips on the company credit card, only the “business” is the United States’ budget, and the golf course is usually one he owns.

Expect Trump to bring up any or all of the above topics in his speech in Duluth. And to lie about them, to brag about all he’s done, to tell these downtrodden people how lucky they are to have him. They need him as much as they need a ship stuck in the harbor. **CE**

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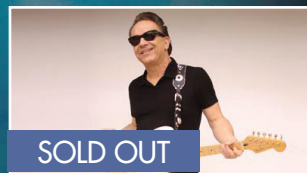
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THE PRIDE ISSUE



Danger & Eggs creators modeled Chickenpaw Park's Pride Festival on Twin Cities Pride in Loring Park.

COURTESY OF DANGER & EGGS

'Danger & Eggs'



How a queer-friendly cartoon from Minneapolis shook up kids' TV and won itself an Emmy

BY HANNAH SAYLE

Bigotry, it's been said, is a failure of imagination.

Could the antidote be a daredevil girl and a nervous egg named Phillip?

DD Danger and her ovular friend spend their days in Chickenpaw Park, tumbling through adventures faster than DD's daredevil dad—slung up in traction and muffled by a too-big neck brace—can squeak out an objection.

Mostly, DD leads the charge, while Phillip, wearing knee and elbow pads and yellow rubber gloves, tries to stave off catastrophe. They travel down the "Tube of Pain" waterslide and encounter a boy who's been missing for 25 years; they outwit a rogue satellite that wants to trap and keep them as friends; they evade the drooling office zombies of the "Parks and Paperwork Department."

They find ridiculous and hilarious ways of getting in and out of trouble. They also tackle topics of gender and

identity better than any cartoon characters, and maybe any television characters, period.

Danger & Eggs, the Emmy Award-winning cartoon conceived and mostly produced in the Twin Cities, sends forth unbridled creativity to counter narrow-minded prejudice. In this universe, colorful characters defy categorization and dodge labels like so many mutant plants in the underworld beneath Chickenpaw Park.

Among the queer-friendly cameos are non-binary Milo, who uses they/them pronouns and is voiced by agender model Tyler Ford; corporate raider Jim, who has two dads; and a transgender girl named Zadie, voiced by teen trans activist Jazz Jennings.

Each is presented without comment or fanfare. You'll find nary a whiff of morality play sanctimony.

"I think a lot of the time, the after-school-special version comes off as really educational because the straight, cisgender creators who made that episode just got an



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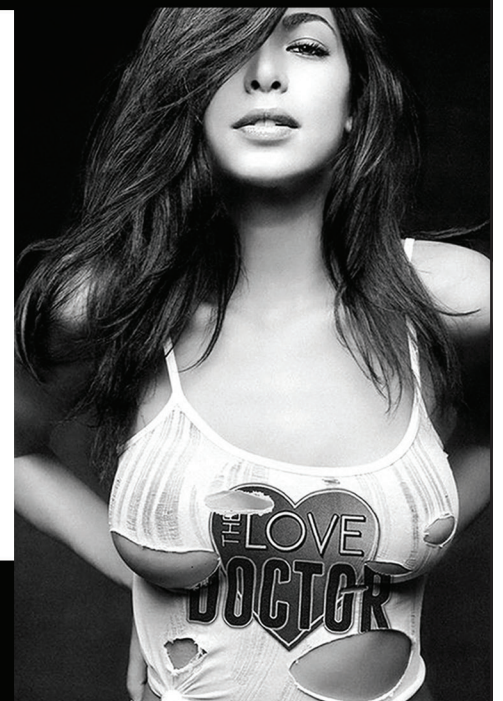
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COURTESY OF DANGER & EGGS

education,” says Shadi Petosky, co-creator of the show. “So they’re translating. They’re trying to take that education and then put it into a story.”

Danger & Eggs, which won a Daytime Emmy this year for outstanding directing in an animated program, was created, directed, voiced, and produced by a remarkably diverse, inclusive team of LGBTQ artists. For Petosky, herself a transgender writer, the show isn’t a translation; it’s a faithful reflection.

“We were just expressing our feeling and showing the lived experience.”



Petosky’s studio, Puny, started in Minneapolis in 2007, contributing animation bits to the wildly popular show *Yo Gabba Gabba!*

With Puny on the radar of larger production companies, Petosky and *Danger & Eggs* co-creator Mike Owens had the chance to pitch other shows.

Owens brought in the idea of an adult cartoon called *Phillip the Safety Egg*, and Puny partnered with local improv group Splendid Things to turn it into a short, five-minute pilot. In the film, the FDA approves an experimental growth hormone for livestock to help fight hunger. The result is a giant chicken who wreaks havoc on its city, and whose son, Phillip, dashes around to fix the damage.

The concept as a show for mature audiences never got traction with networks. So Puny reimaged Phillip as the star of a kids’ show.

“We pitched that around to networks for about five years, constantly revamping it and trying to make it better,” says Petosky. They added a sidekick and best friend for Phillip. They developed a story that would also convey the perspective of queer youth. After several failed developments with other networks, Amazon agreed to option it in 2014.

Shadi Petosky and her kids travel back to Minneapolis every year to march in Twin Cities Pride with the Geek Partnership Society.

It was a bold concept: a show with queer themes and LGBTQ characters geared toward kids in the 6-11 age range.

“It’s still really taboo to show queer people in children’s media,” says Leigh Luna, a graduate of Minneapolis College of Art and Design and a bisexual, Latinx colorist for *Danger & Eggs*. Amazon was already cutting a new path with *Transparent*, its show about a parent who transitions later in life. “It was easier to slide *Danger* in there and have it fit comfortably,” says Luna, but that would not have been as easy to do with more mainstream channels.

Luna remembers how her favorite cartoon, *Sailor Moon*, was censored for North American audiences: A lesbian couple was re-written as a pair of cousins. (The prudishness backfired when some of the couple’s flirtation slipped past the censors, creating a vaguely incestuous rapport.) LGBTQ representation on TV has expanded since then, but gender and sexuality are still largely cordoned off as grown-up concepts.

“It was something we really wanted to show in *Danger & Eggs*,” says Petosky. “These friendships and relationships that didn’t have anything to do with sex. But sexuality manifests at such a young age. Gender identity manifests at such a young age. We wanted to show the hallmarks of queer youth before sex really enters the picture.”

When Petosky was young, she watched *Jem & the Holograms* and *Thundercats*.

“I liked bright, colorful, relationship-based shows,” she says. “You see that reflected in *Danger & Eggs* and *Yo Gabba Gabba!* and a lot of the work that Puny has done: very bright, some would say

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even psychedelic sometimes, and it's so much about relationships and feelings and anxiety—all things that I think a lot of queer people are really in touch with."

Perhaps the most colorful episode centers on the Pride festival in Chickenpaw Park. It is the last episode of the season—maybe ever, if the show isn't renewed—and it's called "Chosen Family." Zadie, a transgender girl, explains what that term means: "You just have a really close friend who loves and supports you as much as family would," Zadie says. "Sometimes more than some families would."

The designers modeled the Chickenpaw Pride Festival in that episode after the Twin Cities Pride Festival in Loring Park, largely because it's such a family-friendly event.

"I think Minneapolis is the only city, Pride-wise, of the 10 or so I've been to, that is so family-inclusive," says Luna. "L.A. Pride is a great party, but it's not something you necessarily want to bring your kid to."

Petosky, who now lives in Los Angeles, says she always brings her family back for Twin Cities Pride and this year will be no exception.

"I march with my kids every year," she says. "Families and playgrounds and drag queens in the sun. I always feel like a drag queen who can keep it together in the sun is the most powerful person on Earth."



Sarah Seember Huisken and Drew Schmidt are Twin Cities-based directors of the "Chosen Family" episode of *Danger & Eggs*. Huisken says her Emmy is still sitting on top of her fridge because she hasn't figured out where to put it.

COURTESY OF DANGER & EGGS



Each episode of *Danger & Eggs* includes a few overtly teachable moments, but there are dozens of subtler ways it challenges viewers.

In the first episode, DD sits on a park bench next to Phillip. Phillip has just spent the episode trying to sort out if his appreciation for broccoli means he's a grown-up. His introspection hasn't led him to any firm conclusions, so he decides not to care.

"Don't you wanna know what you are?" asks DD, voiced by Aidy Bryant of *SNL* fame.

"I'm a curious expert with changing taste," Phillip replies.

"Great!" says DD. "You do you."

Just like that, *Danger & Eggs* gives its stamp of approval to limbo—between being a kid and an adult, between labels of all kinds. It doesn't call on you to dismantle social structures built on harmful binary thinking. It shows you an egg with spindly arms and legs, struggling with the uncertainty of who he is.

"That is a deeply queer theme, the idea of identity and labels," says Petosky. "It's so put upon us all the time. With trans folks, it's like, are you trans enough? If you really look like a cis woman, you're considered to be trying too hard and desperate. If you



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LGBTQ+ crew members drew themselves into the background of the Pride Fest episode. This is MCAD grad and color stylist Leigh Luna.

don't follow those beauty standards, then you're seen as not trying hard enough. It's really a lose-lose.

"It's been great for me in my life and for some of my friends to not feel like they have to label themselves," Petosky continues. "To allow them to have fluidity and to have lived experiences that allow them to change and grow and explore possibilities. That's an important thing for growth—to understand that how we identify ourselves as children and teens doesn't have to be it for us. Queer people really have to think about that a lot, but it's a pretty universal experience."

Since winning the Emmy, Petosky (who described the award as "like a suit of armor, it feels like things can't hurt me") and the rest of the crew have been in a holding pattern about the future of *Danger & Eggs*. Some have moved on to other projects; Petosky is working on a show called *Twelve Forever*, coming to Netflix in 2019. It's about a girl named Reggie who doesn't want to grow up. She creates a fantasy world for herself where she can stay in limbo.

But the legacy of *Danger & Eggs* lives on—as a show that includes LGBTQ characters in an unprecedented way, as a show that embraces yet transcends the "queer cartoon" label. Petosky says they weren't trying to create a show for "this gender or this age." *Danger and Eggs* is for everyone, young and old, queer and straight—anyone ready to open up to a new way of thinking about who we are.

"Who is the real you?" DD asks BLIP, the wayward satellite in the second episode.

"I—I don't know," BLIP replies.

Phillip holds up a knowing finger and smiles: "I always say, identity takes time." 



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PRIDE WEEK

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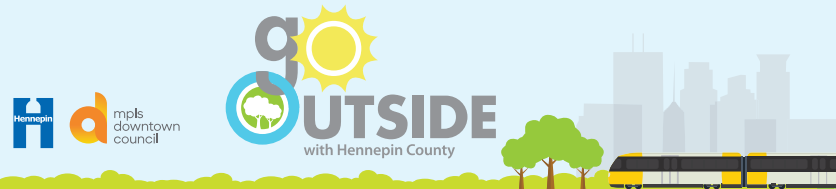
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PRIDE 2018

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AN EVENING WITH ALASKA
‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ superstar Alaska Thunderfuck performs two live singing sets, local drag queens perform throughout the night. Tickets and more info can be found at www.eventbrite.com. 7-11 p.m. June 20; \$30-\$60. Muse Event Center, 107 3rd Ave. N., Minneapolis; 952-562-5620.

DADDY: A QUEER MONTHLY VARIETY SHOW & DANCE NIGHT
Featuring Elektra Cute, Gully Boys, Marcel Michelle Mobama, D. Allen, Archie Bongiovanni, DJ Michel.Be, and DJ Heartbreak on Wednesday; KAOZ, Seaberg, Marcel Michelle Mobama, Junauda Alma, DJ Cabezona, and Mixie on Thursday. 10 p.m. Wed.-Thu. \$12. Icehouse, 2528 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; 612-276-6523.

QUEERTOPIA 2018
Featuring the work of local queer performance and visual artists. Tickets and more info at queertopia2018.brownpapertickets.com. 7:30 p.m. Wed.-Fri. \$15; sliding scale \$5-25 Wed. Red Eye Theater, 15 W. 14th St., Minneapolis; 612-870-0309.

SALOON PRIDE BLOCK PARTY
Featuring a variety of DJs, drag performers, ‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ viewing party, live music, and a Pride Parade viewing party. Check saloonmn.com for full lineup, schedule, and tickets. 12 p.m.-2 a.m. Wed.; 12 p.m.-3 a.m. Thu.-Sat.; 11-2:30 a.m. Sun. Free Wed.-Thu.; \$25-\$30 Fri.-Sun.; \$60 weekend pass. The Saloon, 830 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-332-0835.

THURSDAY, JUNE 21

FLIP PHONE OPEN STAGE WITH JASMINE MASTERS
Night of drag performances hosted by Sunny Kiriyama. Tickets and more info at www.eventbrite.com. 8:30-10 p.m. June 21; \$15. Honey, 205 E. Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-746-0306.

HOLY TRINITY: BEYONCÉ, NICKI, AND RIHANNA WITH JASMINE MASTERS
Featuring drag performance by Jasmine Masters and music by DJ Keezy. 10 p.m. June 21; \$10. Honey, 205 E. Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-746-0306.

LEMONADE MPLS PRIDE KICKOFF PARTY
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THIRD THURSDAY: PRIDE

Featuring make your own Pride flag crafts, screening of 'Out North' documentary with director Daniel Bergin, photo booth, music by DJ Keezy, and pop-up drag performances curated by Flip Phone. 6-9 p.m. June 21. Free. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2400 Third Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-870-3131.

FRIDAY, JUNE 22

BEER DABBLER AT TWIN CITIES PRIDE 2018

Featuring a sampling of specialty beers, with live music from 4th Curtis, Apollo Cobra, and DJ Sheik. Tickets and more info at beerdab-bler.com. 5:30-9:30 p.m. June 22; \$50-\$60; \$20 designated driver. Loring Park, 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis.

GROWN & SEXY PRIDE VIII

Featuring Sweetpea, DJ Shannon Blowtorch, Dykes Do Drag, Ladies of LaFemme, the Vigilantease Collective, and more. 9 p.m. June 22. \$15. First Avenue, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388.

PLANET GLITTER WITH GAGA-RAMA AND ASIA O'HARA

Featuring three floors of DJs, drag performances, and glitter makeovers. Tickets and more info at www.facebook.com. 10 p.m. June 22; \$15-\$25. Union Restaurant & Rooftop, 731 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-455-6690.

QUEERLY BELOVED: PRIDE COMMUNITY MEAL

LGBTQA+ community meal, benefiting Twin Cities queer homeless youth. 5:30-7 p.m. June 22. \$5-\$10 suggested donation. St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 519 Oak Grove St., Minneapolis; 612-870-7800.

SOUL FRIDAY PRIDE PARTY

Featuring DJ Keezy, DJ Lady L, DJ Queen Duin, and DJ AriAtari spinning hip-hop, R&B, old school, world beat, Latin, house, and more. 9 p.m. June 22. \$12-\$15. Icehouse, 2528 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; 612-276-6523.

SATURDAY, JUNE 23

2018 TWIN CITIES PRIDE FESTIVAL

Celebration of the LGBTQ+ community, featuring exhibitor booths, food vendors, four stages with music and performances, and a parade through downtown Minneapolis. More info at www.tcpride.org. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Free. Loring Park, 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis.

FLIP PHONE: XXL PRIDE

Featuring Monet X Change from 'RuPaul's Drag Race,' Cee Cee Russell, Julia Starr, Tygra Slarii, Domita Sanchez, and Utica Queen. 9 p.m. June 23. \$15-\$30. First Avenue, 701 1st Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388.

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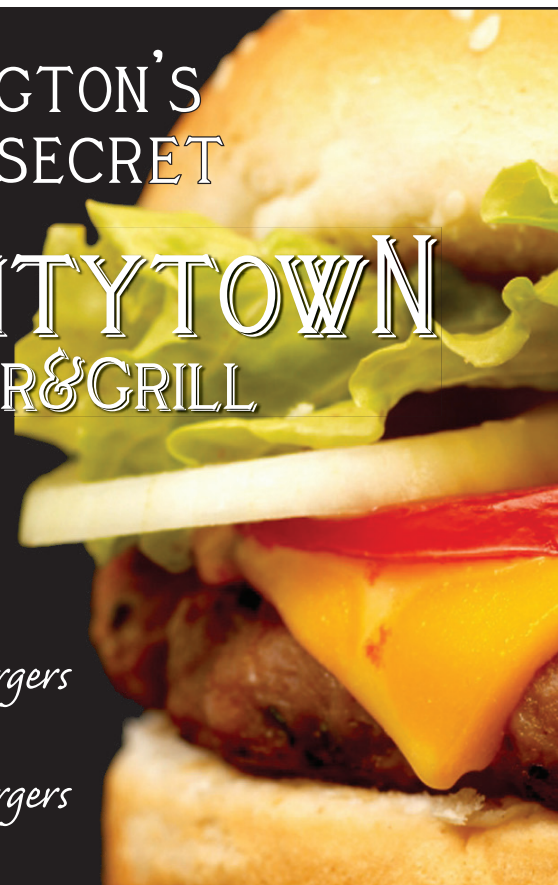


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THANK YOU CUM AGAIN: A PRIDE DANCE PARTY

Featuring DJ Keezy and Shannon Blowtorch, hosted by Yoni Light, with guest performances by Nick Jordan, Izell Pyramid, and Sasha R. Cassadine. 9 p.m. June 23. \$12. Icehouse, 2528 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; 612-276-6523.

TWIN CITIES PRIDE: IN CONCERT

Featuring Brandy, Jamecia Bennett, JuJuBee, and the Vigilante Collective, with fireworks following the concert. Tickets and more info at tccpride.org/pride-in-concert. 6-10 p.m. June 23. \$25-\$99. Loring Park, 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis.

WHITNEY HOUSTON + DIANA ROSS PRIDE DRAG BRUNCH

Presented by Flip Phone. Tickets and more info at flip-phone.ticketleap.com/whitney-houston. 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 23. \$11. Union Restaurant & Rooftop, 731 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-455-6690.

SUNDAY, JUNE 24

ARISE + SHINE 2018

Fundraiser for Artist Project featuring drinks, appetizers, pride-themed gear, and viewing of the Pride Parade. Tickets and more info at www.eventbrite.com. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. June 24. \$40. City Works, 600 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-361-2900.

NO BOYS IN THE BOOTH: KRISTINA SKY

With TeeSo. Tickets and more info at www.eventbrite.com. 10 p.m. May 12; \$10. REV Ultra Lounge, 731 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-770-8278.

PRIDE CRAWL MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis' official Pride Weekend bar crawl through downtown bars. Tickets and more info at www.eventbrite.com. 2 p.m.-12 a.m. June 24. \$15-\$25. Gay 90's, 408 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-333-7755.

PRIDE PARADE ROOFTOP DRAG PARTY AND VIEWING PARTY

Featuring dance music, pop-up drag performances, drinks, and a view of the Pride Parade, with 50% of the proceeds benefiting OutFront Minnesota. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. June 24. \$15. Union Restaurant & Rooftop, 731 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-455-6690.

MONDAY, JUNE 25

'A QUICK & EASY GUIDE TO THEY/THEM PRONOUNS' RELEASE PARTY

Reading celebrating the release of the new book by Archie Bongiovanni and Tristan Jimerson. 7 p.m. June 25. Free. Moon Palace Books, 3032 Minnehaha Ave., Minneapolis; 612-454-0455.

TUESDAY, JUNE 26

PRIDE WEEK DRUNK QUEER HISTORY AT LUSH

Presented by Gadfly Theatre Productions. Tickets and more info at brownpapertickets.com. 7 p.m. June 26. \$10. Lush, 990 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612-208-0358.

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A ROOM OF THEIR OWN

In a sea of Twin Cities gay bars, why isn't there a space for queer women?



Photos from Soul Friday—
“a space for queer women
and people of color
that celebrates our lives
and our existence.”

SALY NIXON

BY SARAH CHANDLER

If iconic British novelist Virginia Woolf came to Minneapolis to attend Pride, what might she say about our lack of consistent public gathering places for queer women?

Sure, the bisexual Woolf, a queer literary icon whose landmark 1929 essay “A Room of One’s Own” became a feminist touchstone, died in 1941. But ask enough people around town who are intimately familiar with the gay scene, and you’ll soon find that the idea of a lesbian bar reappearing seems nearly as fantastical as the notion that Woolf might return from the afterlife to march down Hennepin Avenue in Saturday’s parade.

That’s not for lack of apparent interest. The Twin Cities has one of the most robust LGBTQ populations in the country. We claim a number of gay bars, a handful

of which have been around for decades (and are so popular with heterosexuals, to the dismay of some, that bachelorette parties are rampant). Yet if we’re such a queer-woman-friendly culture—according to *The Advocate* magazine, we even boast “no shortage of lesbian-centric bike events”—why doesn’t Minneapolis or St. Paul have a bar, cafe, coffeehouse, or designated socializing spot for queer women that’s not someone’s living room?

This enigma is not unique to Minneapolis/St. Paul. From Manhattan’s Meow Mix to Los Angeles’ Oxwood Inn, long-running lesbian bars (the Oxwood opened in 1972 and closed just last year) are shuttering from coast to coast. Even in San Francisco, a city *LIFE* magazine nicknamed “The Gay Capital of the U.S.” in 1964, lost its last remaining lesbian bar, the Lexington Club, in 2015.

“Dyke bars all across America have been

closing for the last 15 years,” confirms Minneapolis bartender and blogger Ty Yule, who opened Pi Bar, Minneapolis’ most recent brick-and-mortar lesbian bar, in 2006. (It closed, to much lamentation, in 2008.)

Somehow, this disappearing act doesn’t extend to gay bars for men.

“In most cities, ‘queer’ bars cater almost exclusively to gay men,” Minneapolis writer Krista Burton asserts in a 2017 *New York Times* editorial titled “I Want My Lesbian Bars Back.” That’s not simply an issue for the lesbian community, she suggests, but for anyone who identifies as non-hetero on the increasingly vast spectrum of gender and sexuality. While broadening social acceptance may have weakened the vital social role of the lesbian bar, Burton muses, an essential mystery remains.

“Since lesbian bars tend to absorb all

the queers who aren’t gay men,” Burton writes, “and since more people than ever before are identifying as L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ , don’t you think it’s kind of weird there are so few bars?”

That does seem, well, weird. And yet Shannon, a drag cabaret performer known by their stage name Randy Dandy, suggests that the past two decades have seen a fairly radical cultural shift within the so-called lesbian community, which might account for the loss of these defined gathering spaces.

“In the early 2000s, people who identified as lesbian began opening up to other identities,” says Shannon, who quips that their friends jokingly refer to them—they use gender-neutral, non-binary pronouns—as “the mayor of Gaytown.”

Burton hypothesizes that broadening social acceptance of gay culture might be, ironically, one culprit. “As queer people

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DRINK



SALLY NIXON

become normalized,” Burton writes, “have these tight-knit families and communities once found in lesbian and gay bars just melted away into a puddle of casual societal acceptance?”

Ty Yule seconds Burton’s idea. “For dykes, to have a meeting place used to be a life-saving necessity. That solidarity was paramount to survival,” Yule says. As for why cisgender gay male bars thrive while lesbian spots wither, Yule, who is a trans man, is blunt: “Men will always go to bars and pay for drinks to find people to have sex with,” he laughs.

Tucked into Minneapolis’ quiet Seward neighborhood, Pi Bar was a friendly, inclusive spot that became the de facto community center for the local lesbian community. From trivia and movie nights to karaoke and food—the “Mozzarella Lady Fingers” were apparently semi-legendary—Pi Bar covered a lot of bases.

“I hear a lot of people say, ‘I miss Pi Bar. I wish it was still around,’” says Ms. Valor, one of the three-woman crew who currently runs Soul Friday, the Twin Cities’ longest-running roving dance party for queer women. The event kicked off at Pi Bar a decade ago.

“Soul Friday was a response to not having one location for queer women to gather,” says Ms. Valor. She remembers the 1990s as a very different time. “That was a hot time in the scene,” she adds, recalling spots like Club Metro and Lucy’s in St. Paul, both of which closed in the early 2000s.

Prior to Soul Friday, Twilight, which opened in 2002, held the lesbian dance-party longevity torch, welcoming a spectrum of queer women before the term “cisgender” hit the streets. It celebrated its final night at Dinkytown’s Kitty Cat Klub in late 2011.

As the queer female community evolves, so too do these dance events. “You notice,”



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DRINK



SALLY NIXON

says Shannon, “that none of these nights are described as ‘lesbian’ nights.”

Soul Friday, for example, is “a space for queer women and people of color that celebrates our lives and our existence,” explains Ms. Valor. With its mix of hip-hop, R&B, and world music spun by resident and guest DJs, “it’s a really fun, celebratory space with a community feel.”

“Every month, someone approaches me and expresses gratitude for us being there,” Ms. Valor reflects. “We’ve kept going with it so long because there’s such a need for it.”

Grrrl Scout is another dance event that “strives to create safe and inclusive spaces” for queer women and trans and non-binary people. In an emailed statement, the Grrrl Scout team suggested that the lack of a bar for queer women could be chalked up to “a combination of lifestyle and economics,” including gentrification and the marginalization of queer community members as well as the notion that “queer women are often known to go out less than gay men.”

So, where’s a queer girl or genderqueer person to go?

With Pride around the corner, don’t despair. Soul Friday will be at Icehouse on Friday, Grrrl Scout’s fifth annual Summer Camp Pride Party comes to the Cabooze on Saturday, and both crews are known for putting on some serious parties. And if you’re not in a dancing mood, why not keep it classic and head to Minneapolis’ oldest gay bar, right around the corner from Pride epicenter Loring Park?

The friendly spirit of the 19 Bar, a lovable brick-walled dive that’s been going strong since 1952, might be best summed up by this Yelp reviewer: “I like it here because it’s casual, gay, and even though it’s male-dominated, nobody’s ever been a prick to me for being a gay girl in a gay man’s world.” ☞

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A LIST

SATURDAY Grrrl Scout hosts a summer camp **P. 38**

SUNDAY Food trucks park in Uptown **P. 39**

MONDAY Get schooled on pronouns **P. 39**

WEDNESDAY 6.20

COMEDY

ARJ BARKER

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After the election, many people toyed with the idea of moving overseas. Arj Barker, a California native, has lived in Australia for about a decade. But he's not sure he'd recommend being an expatriate to everyone. "Every situation is different," he says. "It might be right for some people but I wouldn't make a blanket recommendation on changing your whole life." Indeed, Barker didn't turn his back on America so much as he was embraced by Australia. "It just made sense for me." He comes back to the U.S. once a year, mostly to visit family and friends. However, he also takes the opportunity to play some of his favorite clubs here, including Acme. "I talk about married life a little," he says, "and how we're lying to an entire generation of kids by telling them that they're special." He also talks about how technology is making us more entitled and demanding. "It's also killing our ability to think critically." To that end, he's thinking of making changes in his own life. "They're coming out with phones now that don't do as much. I'm thinking of getting one of those so I'm not wasting so much time." 18+. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$15-\$18. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday —P.F. WILSON**

THURSDAY 6.21

COMEDY

TODD GLASS

ROYAL COMEDY THEATRE

A few years ago, Todd Glass introduced a live band into his set, which he'll have with him at the Royal Comedy Theatre. "I'm doing that pretty much in every market and I love it. It's fun for me." The success of his Netflix special *Act Happy* has solidified this direction. "Only the band is even more included now," he adds. Another influence on his set has been his podcast, *The Todd*



BROOKE ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY

Glass Show. "That's good because they're my two favorite things to do. Well, that and visit my mother, in case she's reading this." Audiences in Minneapolis will get a unique version of Glass' act, as he usually plays in much larger venues. However, the intimate feel of the Royal Comedy Theatre was something he couldn't resist. "It's crazy intimate," he confirms. "I couldn't make a living playing rooms like that, but it's a lot of fun to do this one." 21+. 8 p.m. Thursday and Sunday; 7 and 9:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$20. 809 Mainstreet, Hopkins; 612-666-0809. **Through Sunday —P.F. WILSON**

FRIDAY 6.22

COMEDY

PRIDE COMEDY SHOW

SISYPHUS BREWING

Maggie Faris is all about creating her own opportunities in comedy. That's why instead of looking for somewhere to perform during Pride, she decided

to make up a show of her own. Faris, alongside six of the funniest LGBTQ comedians from around Minnesota, will come together at Sisyphus this week for the Pride Comedy Show. "I wanted a combination of comics who are fairly well known around town, and some people who regular comedy goers have never seen before," Faris explains of the lineup, which includes Jakey Emmert, Sarah McPeck, Wendy Berkowitz, Madi Tentinger, Jacob Randall, and Jan Syverson. With thousands of people from all over piling into town for Pride, she realizes that the crowd may be a little different from an average comedy show at Sisyphus. "I think that people in marginalized groups overall don't tend to go to comedy shows very regularly, and maybe aren't necessarily as savvy to the comedy scene in town," she says. Faris has been a staple of the Twin Cities standup scene for many years, as both a performer and a producer. Four years ago, she began putting together an annual East Coast-style New Year's Eve show, complete

with booby prizes, multiple balloon drops, and other little surprises. She's not divulging any details, but promises that the shows this weekend will be similar. "Maybe I'll give everyone silly hats, or maybe I'll bake cookies for everyone," she laughs. "I'll definitely have some surprises up my sleeve." Tickets and more info at can be found at extrememaggie.com. 7 and 9 p.m. \$18. 712 Ontario Ave. W., Minneapolis; 612-321-8324. **—PATRICK STRAIT**

THEATER

WEST SIDE STORY

GUTHRIE THEATER

A major new staging of *West Side Story* is set to occupy the Guthrie Theater this summer. Artistic director Joseph Haj is handling the directorial reins, and he has cited the work as a personal aspiration. Much of the enduring appeal of this Leonard Bernstein/Stephen Sondheim piece stems from the iconic

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ►

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KEVIN KRAMER

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ►

songs, including “Maria,” “Cool,” and “I Feel Pretty.” But even without them, *West Side Story* would still command attention for its ill-fated love affair between Tony and Maria, teenagers whose attraction defies the violent rivalry of their respective neighborhoods. This story has only gotten more relevant in recent years, as the hostility of the Jets (self-defined as true Americans) toward the Sharks (Puerto Rican immigrants) parallels the xenophobia still aimed at those deemed unworthy of the American dream. Boasting contemporary choreography from Maija Garcia and a vibrant cast headlined by Marc Koeck (as Tony) and Mia Pinero (as Maria), this *West Side Story* looks to be a poignant retelling of an endlessly relevant tale. The show is in previews through June 21. Showtimes vary, view complete schedule at www.guthrietheater.org: 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; 7 p.m. Sundays; 1 p.m. Saturdays. \$34-\$92. 818 S. Second St., Minneapolis; 612-377-2224. **Through August 26 —BRAD RICHASON**

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What will be your brew of the summer? At this season’s two Beer Dabblers, you might just find something new that you adore. During the Pride sampling event, you’ll be able to try 50 brews while taking in entertainment and snacks. Try varieties from Bad Weather, Indeed, Milk and Honey, and dozens more in Loring Park the day before the big festival. There will also be a few selections specifically brewed for the event, with touches inspired by an LGBTQ icon of the brewer’s choice. DJ Sheik, 4th Curtis, and Apollo Cobra

will provide tunes, or play your own at the silent disco (bring earbuds). Food trucks stopping by include A Cupcake Social, Black Market StP, Chef Shack Ranch Minneapolis, Dough Dough, Hot Indian, Peeps Hotbox, and Tiki Tim’s. Tickets and more info for each happening can be found at beerdabbler.com. 21+. 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. \$50-\$60; \$20 designated driver. 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

DANCE**FLYING FOOT FORUM: FRENCH TWIST**

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Flying Foot Forum’s *French Twist* is an invigorating fusion of past and present, combining favorite movements with newly developed scenarios, characters, songs, and routines in a Parisian nightclub. Longtime fans of the company are accustomed to the group’s commitment to refreshing revivals, a focus that has elevated Flying Foot Forum to the creative forefront of dance for some 25 years. *French Twist* will feature more imaginative fun from the Joe Chvala-led performers as the acclaimed choreographer/director brings this escapade to life through elements of opera, cabaret, and vaudeville. Audiences can expect balletic sequences, classical arrangements, precise tap, and dexterity-demanding can-can. The show is in previews through June 28. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, plus June 26-27; 2 p.m. Sundays, plus Saturday, July 2. \$25-\$60. 20 W. Seventh Place, St. Paul; 651-291-7005. **Through July 15 —BRAD RICHASON**

Through July 15 —BRAD RICHASON

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 ►

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SEP 01
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W/ OCEANATOR
TUESDAY, JUNE 26

UP NEXT TURF CLUB

WAND
W/ ITASCA, OTTO VAN
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20

SONDRE LERCHE
AN EVENING OF SOLO PLEASURE
THURSDAY, JUNE 21

HALLOWEEN, ALASKA
W/ UNDER VIOLET
FRIDAY, JUNE 22

HOPE COUNTRY AND
KACY & CLAYTON
W/ ALMIGHTY AMERICAN
SATURDAY, JUNE 23

SLOAN
SUNDAY, JUNE 24
BODEGA
W/ PRODUCTS, THE FLORISTS
MONDAY, JUNE 25
THE POSIES
W/ PORCUPINE, TERRA LIGHTFOOT
TUESDAY, JUNE 26
THE BODY
W/ FALSE, LINGUA IGNOTA
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

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MICHAEL CHE
PANTAGES THEATRE
THURSDAY, JULY 12

COURTNEY BARNETT
W/ JULIEN BAKER, LUCY DACUS
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SATURDAY, JULY 21

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A-LIST

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ►

ART/GALLERY

FORMATION: A JURIED EXHIBITION OF THE GUILD OF BOOK WORKERS

MINNESOTA CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS

The Guild of Book Workers launches its two-year national tour at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts this week before traveling to Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston, and Philadelphia. The show's extraordinary array of 50 pieces were selected by artists and guild members. Come see how top book artists from around the country are exploring paper, printing, binding, non-binding, accordion folds, freestanding paper, and all the other ways that book arts can be manifested. There will be an opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, June 22. 1011 Washington Ave. S., Open Book, Ste. 100, Minneapolis; 612-215-2520. **Through October 21 —SHEILA REGAN**

THEATER

BASKERVILLE

PARK SQUARE THEATRE

Baskerville is playwright Ken Ludwig's rollicking adaptation of one of author Arthur Conan Doyle's best-known Sherlock Holmes tales, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Centered on a murder on the foggy moors of a grand estate, the

play features all the trappings a Holmes fan could want—an intriguing mystery, deductive reasoning, enigmatic suspects, and even the suggestion of supernatural terrors—all channeled through Ludwig's signature humor. Lending another twist, Park Square has cast two tremendously talented women in the leading roles with McKenna Kelly-Eiding portraying Holmes and Sara Richardson stepping into the part of his indispensable assistant, Dr. Watson. Directed by Theo Langason, in this production the duo will pursue the villainous culprit among 40 characters, all of whom will be portrayed by just three adept actors: Eric "Pogi" Sumangil, Ricardo Beard, and Marika Proctor. The show is in previews through June 21. 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, plus June 20; 2 p.m. Sundays, plus Saturdays June 23-30. \$25-\$60. 20 W. Seventh Pl., St. Paul; 651-291-7005. **Through August 5 —BRAD RICHASON**

SATURDAY 6.23

FESTIVAL/LGBTQ

TWIN CITIES PRIDE

LORING PARK

Twin Cities Pride returns this summer for two days of fun. This festival offers sporting tournaments, representatives from political and outreach organizations, a beer garden, food

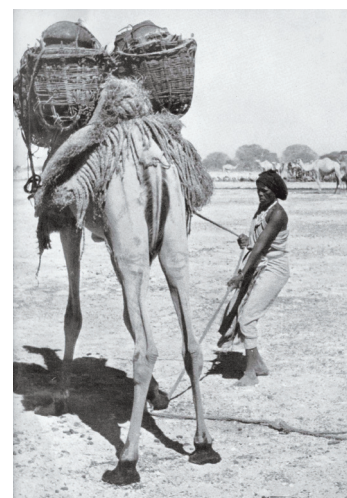
SATURDAY

ART/MUSEUM

SOMALIS + MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER

With the U.S. Somali population larger in Minnesota than anywhere else, the time is long overdue for a renewed appreciation and understanding of this diverse community whose contributions continue to enrich our ever-evolving state. "Somalis + Minnesota," an immersive new exhibit at the Minnesota History Center, developed in collaboration with the Somali Museum of Minnesota, retraces the rich history of the group, expounding upon indigenous Somali customs and traditions before retracing the devastation wrought by the civil war that led to mass migration in the 1990s. Ultimately the exhibit leads into the present day, touching upon the innumerable ways Somali culture has been interwoven into the larger fabric of our society. Highlights include a reconstructed nomadic hut (known as an Aqal Soomaali), collections of vintage photographs, rare artifacts, commentary from Somali historians, and interactive multimedia presentations that allow everyday Somalis to recount their own unique experiences. Opening-day events include family fun, special food and drink, plus free museum admission from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, June 23. 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul; 651-259-3000. **Through June 9, 2019 —BRAD RICHASON**



COURTESY OF MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER



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ANGELA DIVINE PHOTOGRAPHY

trucks, and family fun in Loring Park. Or just sit on a nice patch of grass and chat up some new friends. Saturday night's concert headliner is early-aughts icon Brandy. The parade on Sunday morning is always memorable. As it marches along Hennepin Avenue, from Third Street to 16th Street, you'll spot local sports teams, businesses, entertainers, and more, and there are plenty of places serving cocktails along the route. For a full schedule of happenings, visit www.tcpride.org. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Free. 1382 Willow St., Minneapolis.

Through Sunday —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

ART/SPORTS

DANIEL BUREN: VOILE/TOILE - TOILE/VOILE

BDE MAKA SKA/
MINNEAPOLIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

French conceptualist Daniel Buren is always full of surprises—including finding uses for his artwork. He's transcribed the French words for sail (voile) and canvas (toile) into striped fabric sails used during sailboat races in cities throughout the world. We'll get to watch them on a lake, then up close at an installation in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. This is his latest city-specific piece, and it's a perfect one for local summer sailing and art fanatics. See the sails in action during regatta day at Bde Maka Ska (3010 E. Calhoun Pkwy., Minneapolis) on Saturday. Three days later, sails from the winning boats go up in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. 9 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday. Free. 725 Vineland Place, Minneapolis; 612-375-7600.

Through October 7 —CAMILLE LEFEVRE

BEER/CATS

PINTS & PURRS

BOOM ISLAND BREWING COMPANY

Everything's better with beer, even cats. See for yourself at the third annual Pints & Purrs Fundraiser this Saturday at Boom Island Brewery. In addition to drinking plenty of Belgian-inspired craft beer, you can spend up to seven hours partaking in feline-themed activities. Have your face painted (whiskers, anyone?) by a pro before you strut your stuff in front of cameras on the red carpet. Play cat-themed games, and make "kitty crafts" including cat toys to take home or to donate. The kitten video fashion show will have rescue kittens competing for your donation dollars, while kitten therapy will allow you eight minutes of cuddle time with any number of adoptable, adorable fur balls (reserve online in advance so you don't get left out). If you're hungry after all that cat-lovin' fun, Gastrotruck will be on site to satisfy your appetite. A portion of Boom Island's taproom sales will benefit Feline Rescue, a St. Paul-based cat rescue organization that provides shelter and veterinary services for cats in need until they find new homes. 1 to 8 p.m. Free. 2014 Washington Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-227-9635. —ERICA RIVERA

LGBTQ/PARTY

GRRRL SCOUT: SUMMER CAMP 2018

THE CABOOZE

While the main Pride festival ends around 6 p.m., people will continue to celebrate around town into the wee hours of the morning. This Saturday night, the Cabooze will be hosting Grrrl Scout's annual Pride party. The event

will include live music and burlesque performances from the likes of Scarlett Revolver, Red Bone, Symone Smash It, and New Black City. Pick out a made-to-order screen-printed tee, douse yourself in glitter at the sparkle station, and relax on the patio. Other fun includes bar games, beach volleyball, and pool and pinball tables. 21+. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. \$15. 917 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-6425. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SUNDAY 6.24

FESTIVAL/FOOD

UPTOWN FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL 2018

CALHOUN SQUARE

Most days, folks can find food trucks in downtown Minneapolis or outside of a brew hall, but nary a vehicle makes its way to Uptown. This Sunday, however, more than 65 trucks will stop by Calhoun Square to feed shoppers as they stroll along Hennepin Avenue. Choose from a wide variety of eats, including spicy Indian food, giant burritos, burgers, fried fish, cupcakes, and even cookie dough. Wash it down with beer, and enjoy live music throughout the day. For a complete lineup of trucks, visit www.uptownfoodtruckfestival.com. 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Free. 3001 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

MONDAY 6.25

BOOKS/LGBTQ

ARCHIE BONGIOVANNI AND TRISTAN JIMERSON

MOON PALACE BOOKS

Someday, using gender-neutral pronouns will be as automatic as breathing. Until then, there's *A Quick & Easy Guide to They/Them Pronouns*, a comic book that clarifies how to use they/them pronouns and why using inaccurate pronouns (or assuming what the correct ones are) is so hurtful. The book includes tips and scripts on how to ask about a person's pronouns, what to say if you commit a pronoun faux pas or misgender someone, and how to be an ally to people who use they/them pronouns. There's also advice and encouragement for those who use they/them pronouns and become frustrated navigating our binary-centric society. Local genderqueer artist and Daddy co-founder Archie Bongiovanni teamed up with cisgender male writer and restaurant owner Tristan Jimerson to create the guide; their humor and authentic repartee make learning about respectful pronoun use less uncomfortable and more fun. 7 p.m. Free. 3032 Minnehaha Ave., Minneapolis; 612-454-0455. —ERICA RIVERA

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WALKER

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WHY SO SERIOUS?

Hotel Artemis has a killer cast and no sense of humor



Sterling K. Brown and
Brian Tyree Henry

COURTESY OF GLOBAL ROAD ENTERTAINMENT

BY BRYAN MILLER

Decent drinking game: Get a bottle of something potent, and take a hit off it every time *Hotel Artemis* reminds you of *John Wick*.

Better drinking game: Just do some shots and rewatch *John Wick*. (For maximum enjoyment, fast-forward past the dog-murder stuff.)

In fairness, *Hotel Artemis* is more than a *John Wick* knockoff. It's a hodgepodge of cinematic tropes and callbacks, blended up and reconstituted into some partially hydrogenated brick of movie product.

The semi-intriguing concept sounds like it was improvised by a loopy teenager in one breathless run-on sentence. The *Hotel Artemis* is a combination safe house/hospital for criminals, and on the night that water-shortage riots in near-future Los Angeles threaten to overrun the city, the hotel becomes the gathering place for a cadre of outlaws all seeking the sci-fi medical treatment of an agoraphobic nurse who isn't aware one of her clients is there to assassinate another.

Jodie Foster—billed simply as the Nurse—is the lynchpin of the ensemble, holding down the high-tech fort with only the help

of her mountainous concierge and hospital orderly, Everest (movie MVP Dave Bautista).

The underworld characters she connects, known by tropical-themed aliases like Acapulco and Waikiki, include a steely bank robber (Sterling K. Brown) and his injured brother (*Atlanta*'s Brian Tyree Henry), a motormouthed arms dealer (Charlie Day), a sexy contract killer (Sofia Boutella), and the mysterious criminal mastermind who owns the hotel.

If you do feel compelled to see *Hotel Artemis*, at least avoid looking at the cast list ahead of time—the reveal of the actor playing the hotel's owner is one of the film's most pleasant surprises.

Not that the rest of the cast isn't game. Aside from the awkwardly vamping Boutella and a miscast Charlie Day, it's a killer lineup. The overqualified Foster is excellent, of course, and her personal reclusiveness adds a layer of depth to her character's refusal to leave the hotel. Brown's cerebral cool is formidable, Henry brings soulfulness to what could be a throwaway part, and Zachary Quinto plays the crime boss' son as a bumbling, approval-craving Don Jr. type.

Yet *Iron Man 3* writer and first-time director Drew Pearce defies mathematics by arriving at a sum less than the total of

HOTEL ARTEMIS

directed by Drew Pearce
now open, area theaters

the parts. No one of *Hotel Artemis*' various interwoven storylines is particularly inspired or allotted enough screen time to exist as more than a sketch. The whole thing snaps together like cheap Swedish furniture, functional but inelegant.

The noirish set design is familiar but not evocative. The water shortage subplot hints at the pulp populist propaganda of early John Carpenter yet never rises above plot device. A couple of solid fight scenes are barely enough to qualify it as an action movie. *Hotel Artemis* suffers by comparison to its inspirations in nearly every instance.

The most obvious comparison being to *John Wick*, with its Continental hotel. But whereas the *John Wick* movies play the concept of a hotel for hitmen as an entrée into an even nuttier mythology about a vast, interconnected cabal of assassins, *Hotel Artemis* fusses over its rules of order strictly as scaffolding for the storyline.

Hotel Artemis defies any attempt to lean into its summer-matinee silliness. It fronts a high concept but fails to even make good on lowbrow thrills. **C**

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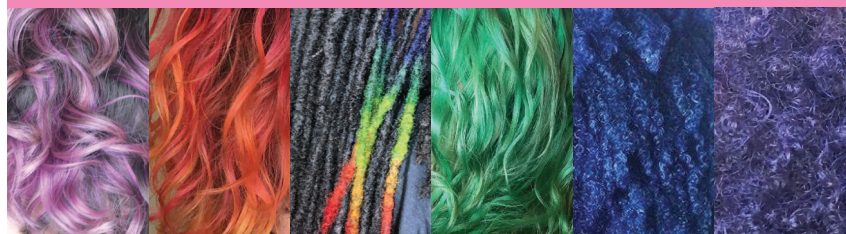
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TRAVIS VOELS

BY JAY GABLER

Once the thermometer hits 70, Minnesota diners run for patios like the restaurants are on fire. Why not treat theater the same way? Classical Actors Ensemble is providing a fine opportunity with an outdoor production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Vitamin D isn't the only reason to see Shakespeare in the park. The open-air, open-admission setting brings the Bard down to earth. Shakespeare sometimes seems like a chore—but not for the bikers, dog-walkers, and picnickers who stumbled upon *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lake Harriet Rose Garden on Friday night and spontaneously took seats to enjoy the show. Even a boy who looked to be about eight years old sat transfixed for two hours, sharing a bag of popcorn with his grown-ups.

Productions of *Romeo and Juliet* are like weddings: fancy clothes and elaborate settings are nice bonuses, but the bottom line is that if you believe the couple are truly in love, you'll enjoy yourself. If you don't, you won't. Here, director Joseph Papke has paired an endearingly twitterpated couple in Mike Tober and Emma VanVactor-Lee.

The pair's chemistry is on lock from their first shared scene, when they meet at a party. VanVactor-Lee leaps up to grab Tober's face for an enthusiastic, totally teenage liplock. "You kiss by the book," she giggles in a voice that suggests she might have some other volumes for him to peruse.

Papke doesn't particularly concern his cast with extracting every ounce of meaning from the text. They know they've got to

ROMEO AND JULIET

Various locations
www.classicalactorsensemble.org
Through July 15

reach those curious onlookers in the back, and thus adopt an accessible, conversational style. It keeps the focus on the plot and on the emotional stakes, which are always clear.

The actors also have fun with audience interactions in a setting where the fourth wall is actually a low rope they can hop across when they need to hide from their rivals, consult with onlookers, or just find someone to hold their wine bottle while they dance. As is the company's wont, they add zest to the proceedings with performances of pop songs, including a concluding *Abbey Road* moment that shouldn't work, but totally does.

Beyond the star-crossed couple, cast standouts include Tyler Stamm, whose charismatic and wild-haired performance suggests what it might have looked like if a young Bill Murray had given the Mercutio role a shot; Alan Tilson, whose exasperated Friar Laurence seems to wish he could be excluded from this narrative; and Jacob Hooper, who gets a lot of comic mileage out of the illiterate Peter.

After an adorably giddy balcony scene, VanVactor-Lee and Tober convincingly turn to lament when their families' deadly rivalry scotches their hopes of a happy marriage. Their youthful mien lends a particular poignance to the play's end. They were just a couple of kids who wanted to dance, drink, and make out in the park. So relatable. **CP**

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STREET *Style*

WE WANT THE FUNK! Funk Fest at Sociable Cider Werks on June 10. **BY AMY GEE**



ELSIE VUE

25, TEACHER

What are you wearing?

Urban Outfitters loose black romper, H&M white bell-sleeve top, white Converse slip-on shoes, and thrifted hat.

Describe your style:

Edgy, simple, chic, and loose.

Who's your current style crush?

Eugenie Grey (Feral Creature) and Rihanna. Both iconic in my eyes!

Favorite thing about summer style?

Sun hats, bold lip color, platform shoes, patterned shirts and pants, and oversized tops and bottoms.



TESS FELLMAN

27, ADVERTISING

What are you wearing?

ASOS top, Forever 21 pants and shoes, bag and earrings from Francesca's, H&M sunglasses.

Describe your style:

A chic, edgy mix.

Who's your current style crush?

For summer, it's @thesaltyblonde on Instagram.

Favorite thing about summer style?

You can layer while still playing up fun tropical vibes.



WHITNEY NELSON

32, LEASING AGENT, BARTENDER

What are you wearing?

Top, skirt, and shoes from H&M.

Describe your style:

Sophisticated but funky, comfortable but classic, bold but fresh.

Who's your current style crush?

Janelle Monáe.

Favorite thing about summer style?

Flowy pants.



CALLIE KISTLER

34, RECRUITING FIRM ACCOUNT MANAGER

What are you wearing?

Julia Jordan dress from Macy's, H&M bag, shoes from DSW.

Describe your style:

Artsy, bright colors, bold prints. I like mixing textures.

Where do you get style inspiration?

I feel like I'll see a painting somewhere and I'll try those colors together.

Favorite thing about summer style?

Dresses. I hate being pinched up in jeans.

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 EP Release Show "To Where And From"
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SPACE AGE LOVE SONGS

On *Alien Fantasy*, Dennis discover a new galaxy of emotion



Sarah Morrison,
Katie Bolin, and
Nigel Carleton
of Dennis

JERARD FAGERBERG

BY JERARD FAGERBERG

Katie Bolin picks up an incandescent 12-pound ball and pitches it down the lane. She watches, body locked, as it swerves toward the gutter, clipping only the leftmost pin before disappearing into the disco-lit pit.

An onscreen animation mocks her, but the singer for the DIY Minneapolis pop group Dennis shrugs it off and darts her fingertip toward the pile of chicken tenders on our table.

"Wait!"

At bandmate Sarah Morrison's insistence, Bolin stops. Morrison plops her purse on her lap, unzips it, and produces a packet of McDonald's hot mustard. Bolin squeals with glee. The sauce, discontinued by Micky D's in 2015, is only broken out for special occasions.

This is a special occasion.

Dennis are not only celebrating the completion of their sophomore LP, *Alien Fantasy*, but their triumph over pessimism. The band's 2014 debut, *Don't Fall in Love*, was a rebellious dismissal of all things romantic, sounding halfway between a

16-bit Passion Pit demo and a lost Britney Spears revenge album.

"There's so much bullshit when you're dating," Bolin says. "Datingsucks. It's really hard and weird to connect. That's where that album came from."

Four years later, Bolin is in the best relationship of her life. No near-gutterball can take away her glee. In fact, the Earth itself cannot contain Bolin's emotions—the only way she could think to express how good she feels was via an intergalactic space odyssey.

"It's a real snapshot of being really, super in love," Bolin says of *Alien Fantasy*. "A lot of the songs that are like, 'Holy shit, blissed out, I'm in love.' I was really feeling that."

Bolin's interstellar journey begins on the title track. "Alien Fantasy" was the first song she wrote for the record, and the trappings of young, untested love are alive in its frantic pulses and video game sound effects, as Bolin wonders whether the way she feels even exists or if it's a mirage projected by

an extraterrestrial life form.

On "Another World," Bolin probes the cosmos in search of an answer to that query, and on "Nu Galaxy" she arrives at her destination. Awash in waves of synth and whispered melodies, Bolin ceases her search, content to never fully understand the world she now inhabits.

IT'S MORRISON'S TURN on the lane, and she lobs a pink ball down the planks with Daria-like detachment. Before it even reaches the pins, she's back at the table pouring herself another Summit out of the pitcher.

Morrison was Bolin's writing partner on *Don't Fall in Love*. Both had given up on Tinder and clumsy happy-hour set-ups, absconding instead to Bolin's bedroom, where they spun their disenchantment with men into cathartic jams. Helping Bolin channel her cosmic love into music has allowed Morrison to overcome her previous resistance to earworm pop.

"I've started to appreciate what a catchy hook can do," Morrison says. "Listening to more to pop music, I realize it doesn't all need to be surface-level fluff. It can say something."



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THURSDAY, JUNE 28

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Princeton Brown**

5-7pm

High & Mighty

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Saturday, June 23
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Tuesday, July 3
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Thursday, July 12
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Saturday, July 14
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MUSIC

The Midwest has a strange relationship with pop music. As Bolin notes, much of the audience for Top 40 pop lives in the heartland, but artists in this region are geographically and often aesthetically far removed from the industry that produces that music. Dennis wants to be the home-grown option for pop fans.

At least Bolin does, though Morrison is increasingly on board with that mission. The bassist's major contribution to *Alien Fantasy* is the love song "Spells." It's an entrancing turn for the usually dour Morrison, who admits she isn't as lucky in love as Bolin. But she swallows her cynicism, singing through a wall of Auto-Tune to promise a bygone love that she'll return to win them back.

"I'm just happy to be part of her vision," Morrison says, glancing Bolin's way. Bolin drags a chicken strip through the hot mustard and throws her compatriot a grateful smile.

IT'S BEEN A DISAPPOINTING, sub-100 game for everyone except Nigel Carleton, the 25-year-old drummer that Bolin and Morrison adore and revere in equal measures. Carleton changes out of his bowling shoes and leads the party over to the air hockey tables. He picks up a felt-bottomed striker and challenges Bolin to a game before shyly admitting that he's never played before.

Carleton's been a part of Dennis for three years now, playing synth and sampler along with his electronic drum kit. Though younger than his bandmates (and a horrendous air hockey competitor—Bolin mollywhops him to the tune of 5-1), he's been a grounding force for the ever-evolving band.

Carleton's presence is felt most forcefully in the live show, but his fingerprints are all over "I Could Never Let You Go," the Haim-like closer of *Alien Fantasy*. It's by far the most conventional song Dennis has yet produced, and Carleton's bouncy fills carry it from verse to bridge to chorus. Bolin has also sweetened Carleton on pop music with her unflinching love of Britney Spears, Kesha, and Ace of Base.

"A song that has a basic verse-chorus-verse structure, that used to be really taboo," Carleton says. "That's what attracts me to playing in this band. We're just like, 'We're gonna take this totally punk approach to what we have, we're not gonna overproduce it, but it still has that infectious atmosphere.'"

Bolin has christened Dennis' mishmash of a zero-consequence electropop sound and low-budget DIY ethos "ratpop"—and with a genre tag like that, it's hard to be too earnest about anything. After all, this is a band that was invented in GarageBand, that got its start gigging at house shows with a repertoire of Madonna-influenced tunes.

And if Bolin is right and this world is indeed just some simulation devised by a



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MUSIC

higher intelligence, then it's important not to dwell on the dark spots in the past. You need to enjoy it to survive. That's why she chooses to surround herself with people who bowl like geeks and bring along the good mustard.

"We try to keep it fun," Bolin says, jubilant in her air hockey ass-kicking. "Why the fuck else would we be doing this if it isn't fun?" ☐

CRITICS' PICKS

ALLAN KINGDOM, DRELLI

7TH ST. ENTRY, SUNDAY 6.24

You probably don't need an introduction to Allan Kingdom, the St. Paul singer and rapper whose ever-inventive sound keeps growing more globally influenced. Minneapolis rapper Drelli is the newer face here, and while his colorful "swagbop" is comparable to Allan's music in some ways, he also uniquely incorporates electronic styles, particularly house. This daytime show celebrates the new release of Allan's *Peanut Butter Prince* and Drelli's debut project, *Hey Drelli*. All ages. \$10/\$12. 12 p.m. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. —MICHAEL MADDEN

SLOAN

TURF CLUB, SUNDAY 6.24

Over a quarter-century and 12 studio albums (with no particularly long gaps between them), Toronto four-piece Sloan may be the most consistent, reliable band from the '90s alt-rock boom. On their simply titled new album, April's 12, they resurrect some of the shoegaze crunch of their 1992 debut, *Smeared*. But more often, the group (whose constant four members all contribute songwriting) let their long-mastered flair for power-pop melodies burst and shine. 21+. 7 p.m. \$20. 1601 University Ave., St. Paul; 651-647-0486. —MICHAEL MADDEN

CHROMEO

FIRST AVENUE, MONDAY 6.25

Challenging themselves to reinvigorate their '80s-remembering electro-funk, Montreal duo Chromeo have grown more collaborative. They brought in Solange, Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig, and Toro Y Moi for their fourth album, 2014's *White Women*; the new *Head Over Heels* notably features both star vocalists (including DRAM and French Montana) and instrumentalists (like ex-Time guitarist Jesse Jones). The LP, while not exactly revelatory, sounds surprisingly fresh. With Pomo. 18+. 7:30 p.m. \$33.50. 701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. —MICHAEL MADDEN

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Po Etik, Hosted by Moonlight

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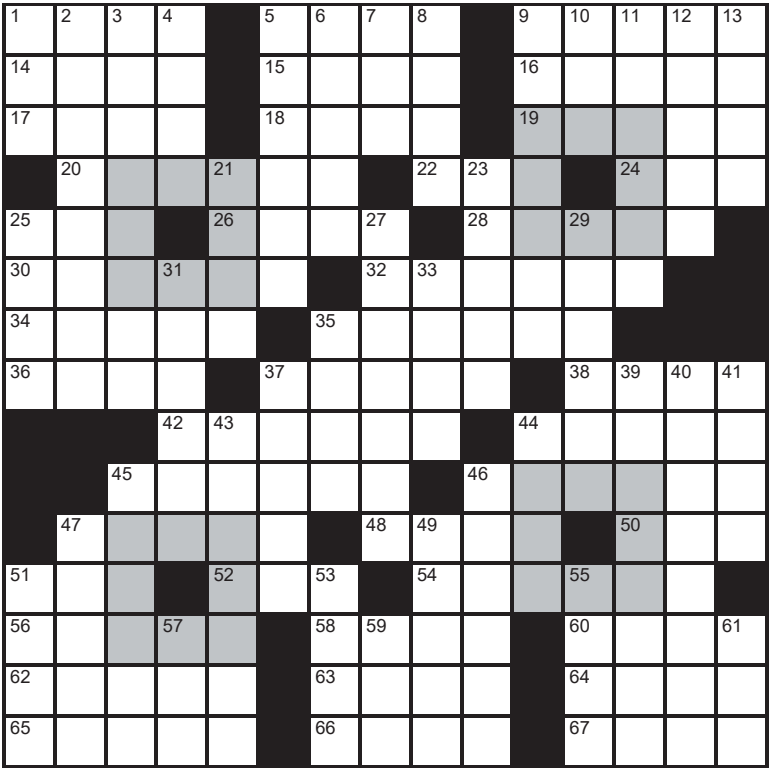
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CROSSWORD



JOY RIDES

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

Across

1

Seaplane stop

5

It might be bulletproof

9

Give a bit more energy

14

Teleport

15

New product show

16

Candy maker H. B. ____

17

Land with a flat top

18

Sports org. with a redshirt rule

19

Crowd, supposedly

20

Holy man of lost causes

22

Misfire

24

“Son of,” to a Saudi

25

Place with a platform: Abbr.

26

Banjo maestro Fleck

28

“Pimp Juice” rapper

30

Shot blocker

32

Guided by ____ (indie rock institution)

34

Withdrawn

35

Didn’t quit

36

Pipe part

37

Like the words that “go round” in this puzzle

38

Beret’s spot

42

Slam material

44

Large steamship

45

Bubble up?

46

Mideast VIP

47

____ Raw (Dutch clothing company)

48

Parisian pair

50

Big club?

51

“Happy Days”

52

[This mic on?]

54

____ Green, Scotland

56

Ten, in Turin

58

Thornfield Hall governess

60

D&D baddie

62

____ Park, NJ

63

Spin

64

High, in music

65

Cosmetician Elizabeth

66

“Dark Horse” singer Perry

67

Check out

Down

1

Watson’s creator

2

Makes certain

3

It’s often first in a bibliography

4

Mus. key with four sharps

5

Buyer

6

Really shine

7

Hot stone massage setting

8

Horny hopper

9

Style similar to Streamline Moderne

10

“Color me unimpressed”

11

Landmines, e.g.

12

Words before an expiration date

13

Kind of hammer

21

eBay rival

23

Togetherness

25

Big drillers: Abbr.

27

Alleged, as fact

29

Dal pulse

31

Rock-clinging shellfish

33

“Grand Ole” place

35

Vintage toon Etta

37

Ben Stiller’s mom Anne

39

Mix things up

40

Service wheels

41

Bird of crosswords

43

Stumped words?

44

High quality

45

Go up

46

“This must be the case”

47

Pam of Blaxploitation films

49

Bird of crosswords

51

Molly, for short

53

Employee’s benefit

55

Exactamundo

57

2018 NBA Finals losers: Abbr.

59

Passing vote

61

“I slaved over a hot stove for you!”

Last Week’s Answer

A	L	P	O		C	H	E	E	P		F	U	S	S				
N	O	O	N		R	U	M	B	A		I	N	C	A				
G	L	I	B		A	L	I	A	S		S	I	R	I				
				S	U	M	M	A	R	Y	S	C	H	O	O	L		
				J	O	D	I	E		R	E	N	D					
				H	U	N	G	A	R	Y	G	A	M	E	S			
				A	L	O	E	S		A	R	R	O	W		O	B	I
				H	E	A	T		I	S	I	T	I		W	H	O	M
				A	S	K		S	K	I	E	S		R	A	I	S	A
					C	H	E	R	R	Y		P	E	R	S	O	N	
				B	A	I	O			R	E	H	E	M				
				M	Y	S	T	E	R	Y	C	O	F	F	E	E		
				E	L	O	I		A	M	A	T	I		A	N	E	W
				M	A	N	E		S	H	I	R	R		D	O	V	E
				E	W	E	S		P	A	N	A	M		S	W	A	B

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7pm : kfai house party presents
cooker john band
9:30pm : aloha from hell,
the living deads

thu : june 21
9:30pm : cross pollination
tucker jensen (of dirt train)
and celeste heule
(of battlerat and pleasure horse)

fri : june 22
7pm : laura and sean's
movie and music trivia
10pm : hey, remember nostalgia
(cd release), panther ray
edward the confessor

sat : june 23
7pm : trivia mafia presents
331 drinkin' spelling bee
10pm : blinds, kaleem the dream,
bronson wisconsin

sun : june 24
3-5pm : no fun sunday presents
siama matuzungidi
8pm : trivia mafia

mon : june 25
8pm : the roe family singers
10pm : doug otto and friends

tue : june 26
7-9pm : t.e.e. tuesday early evening
francis gumm
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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Brezсны

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19): According to my analysis of the astrological omens, you have cosmic permission to enjoy extra helpings of waffles, crepes, pancakes, and blintzes. Eating additional pastries and doughnuts is also encouraged. Why? Because it's high time for you to acquire more ballast. You need more gravitas and greater stability. You can't afford to be top-heavy; you must be hard to knock over. If you would prefer not to accomplish this noble goal by adding girth to your butt and gut, find an alternate way. Maybe you could put weights on your shoes and think very deep thoughts.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You're slipping into the wild heart of the season of discovery. Your curiosity is mounting. Your listening skills are growing more robust. Your willingness to be taught and influenced and transformed is at a peak. And what smarter way to take advantage of this fertile moment than to decide what you most want to learn about during the next three years? For inspiration, identify a subject you'd love to study, a skill you'd eagerly stretch yourself to master, and an invigorating truth that would boost your brilliance if you thoroughly embodied it.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Playwright and novelist Samuel Beckett won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. Four of his works were essential in earning that award: the play *Waiting for Godot*, and the novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*. Beckett wrote all of them in a two-year span during the late 1940s. During that time, he was virtually indigent. He and his companion, Suzanne, survived on the paltry wage she made as a dressmaker. We might draw the conclusion from his life story that it is at least possible for a person to accomplish great things despite having little money. I propose that we make Beckett your role model for the coming weeks, Gemini. May he inspire you to believe in your power to become the person you want to be no matter what your financial situation may be.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22): I suggest you ignore the temptation to shop around for new heroes and champions. It would only distract you from your main assignment in the coming weeks, which is to be more of a hero and champion yourself. Here are some tips to guide you as you slip beyond your overly modest self-image and explore the liberations that may be possible when you give yourself more credit. Tip #1: Finish outgrowing the old heroes and champions who've served you well. Tip #2: Forgive and forget the disappointing heroes and hypocritical champions who betrayed their own ideals. Tip #3: Exercise your unwarranted admiration for mere celebrities who might have snookered you into thinking they're heroes or champions.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): "A waterfall would be more impressive if it flowed the other way," said Irish writer Oscar Wilde. Normally, I would dismiss an idea like this, even though it's funny and I like funny ideas. Normally, I would regard such a negative assessment of the waterfall's true nature, even in jest, to be unproductive and enfeebling. But none of my usual perspectives are in effect as I evaluate the possibility that Wilde's declaration might be a provocative metaphor for your use in the coming weeks. For a limited time only, it might be wise to meditate on a waterfall that flows the other way.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Stage magicians may seem to make a wine glass hover in mid-air, or transform salt into diamonds, or make doves materialize and fly out of their hands. It's all fake, of course—tricks performed by skilled illusionists. But here's a twist on the old story: I suspect that for a few weeks, you will have the power to generate effects that may, to the uninitiated, have a resemblance to magic tricks—except that your magic will be real, not fake. And you will have worked very hard to accomplish what looks easy and natural. And the marvels you generate will, unlike the illusionists', be authentic and useful.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): The coming weeks will be a favorable time to accentuate and brandish the qualities that best exemplify your Libran nature. In other words, be extreme in your moderation. Be pushy in your attempts to harmonize. Be bold and brazen as you make supple use of your famous balancing act. I'll offer you a further piece of advice, as well. My first astrology teacher believed that when Librans operate at peak strength, their symbol of power is the iron fist in the velvet glove: power expressed gracefully, firmness rendered gently. I urge you to explore the nuances of that metaphor.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): If I were your mom, I'd nudge you out the door and say, "Go play outside for a while!" If I were your commanding officer, I'd award you a shiny medal for your valorous undercover work and then order you to take a frisky sabbatical. If I were your psychotherapist, I would urge you to act as if your past has no further power to weigh you down or hold you back, and then I would send you out on a vision quest to discover your best possible future. In other words, my dear Scorpio, I hope you will flee your usual haunts. Get out of the loop and into the open spaces that will refresh your eyes and heart.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Sex education classes at some high schools employ a dramatic exercise to illustrate the possible consequences of engaging in heterosexual lovemaking without using birth control. Everywhere they go for two weeks, students must carry around a 10-pound bag of flour. It's a way for them to get a visceral approximation of caring for an infant. I recommend that you find or create an equivalent test or trial for yourself in the coming days. As you consider entering into a deeper collaboration or making a stronger commitment, you'll be wise to undertake a dress rehearsal.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Members of the Dull Men's Club celebrate the ordinary. "Glitz and glam aren't worth the bother," they declare. "Slow motion gets you there faster," they pontificate. Showing no irony, they brag that they are "born to be mild." I wouldn't normally recommend becoming part of a movement like theirs, but the next two weeks will be one of those rare times when aligning yourself with their principles might be healthy and smart. If you're willing to explore the virtues of simple, plain living, make the Swedish term "lagom" your word of power. According to the Dull Men's Club, it means "enough, sufficient, adequate, balanced, suitable, appropriate."

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): In the Georgian language, "shemomechama" is a word that literally means "I ate the whole thing." It refers to what happens when you're already full, but find the food in front of you so delicious that you can't stop eating. I'm concerned you might soon be tempted to embark on metaphorical versions of shemomechama. That's why I'm giving you a warning to monitor any tendencies you might have to get too much of a good thing. Pleasurable and productive activities will serve you better if you stop yourself before you go too far.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Please do not send me a lock of your hair or a special piece of your jewelry or a hundred dollar bill. I will gladly cast a love spell on your behalf without draining you of your hard-earned cash. The only condition I place on my free gift is that you agree to have me cast the love spell on you and you alone. After all, your love for yourself is what needs most work. And your love for yourself is the primary magic that fuels your success in connecting with other people. (Besides, it's bad karma to use a love spell to interfere with another person's will.) So if you accept my conditions, Pisces, demonstrate that you're ready to receive my telepathic love spell by sending me your telepathic authorization.

Blown Away

Is it wrong to receive unreciprocated blowjobs from my gay friend?



Dan Savage

I am a 24-year-old straight guy who recently broke up with my girlfriend of more than four years. She had a particular aversion to oral sex—both giving and receiving. I didn't get a blowjob the whole time we were together. Which brings me to why I am writing: One of my closest friends, "Sam," is a gay guy. Shortly after breaking up with my girlfriend, I was discussing my lack of oral sex with Sam and he said he'd be willing to "help me out." I agreed, and Sam gave me an earth-shattering blowjob. I was glad to get some and had no hang-ups about a guy sucking me. Since then, Sam has blown me three more times. My problem is I am starting to feel guilty and worry I am using Sam. He's a very good buddy, and I'm concerned this lopsided sexual arrangement might be bad for our friendship. Sam knows I am not into guys and I'm never going to reciprocate, and I feel like this is probably not really fair to him. But these are literally the only blowjobs I've received since I was a teenager. What should I do?

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Only one person knows how Sam feels about this "lopsided sexual arrangement," THROAT, and it isn't me—it's Sam.

And that's why I wrote you back, THROAT, and asked you for Sam's contact information. Since you were clearly too afraid to ask Sam yourself (most likely for fear the blowjobs would stop), I offered to ask Sam on your behalf. I wasn't serious—it was my way of saying, "You should really ask Sam." But you sent me Sam's contact info, and a few minutes later I was chatting with Sam.

"Yes, I have been sucking my straight friend's cock," Sam said to me. "And I am flattered he told you I was good at it. That's an ego booster!"

Sam, like THROAT, is 24 years old. He grew up on the East Coast and met THROAT early in his first year at college. Sam came out at the end of his freshman year, to THROAT and his other friends, and he now lives in a big city where he works in marketing when he isn't sucking off THROAT.

My first question for Sam: Is he one of those gay guys who gets off on "servicing" straight guys?

"I've never done anything with a straight guy before this," said Sam. "So, no, I'm not someone who is 'into servicing straight guys.' I have only ever dated and hooked up with gay guys before!"

So why offer to blow THROAT?

"I didn't know until after he broke up with his girlfriend that he hadn't gotten a blowjob the whole time they were together—four years!" Sam said. "When I told him I'd be happy to help him out, I was joking. But there was this long pause, and then he got serious and said he'd be into it. I wondered for a minute if it would be weird for me to blow my friend, and there was definitely a bit of convincing each other that we were serious. When he started taking his clothes off, I thought, 'So this is going to happen.' It was not awkward after. We even started joking about it right away."

Does this lopsided sexual arrangement—blowing a straight boy who's never going to blow him—bother Sam?

"I suppose it is a 'lopsided sexual arrangement,'" said Sam. "But I don't mind. I really like sucking dick and I'm really enjoying sucking his dick. He has a really nice dick! And from my perspective, we're both having fun. And, yes, I've jacked off thinking about it after each time I sucked him. I know—now—that he thinks it is a bit unfair to me. But I don't feel that way at all."

So there is something in it for Sam. You get the blowjobs, THROAT, and Sam gets the spank-bankable memories. And Sam assumes that at some point, memories are all he'll have.

"He will eventually get into a relationship with a woman again, and our arrangement will end," said Sam. "I only hope nothing is weird between us in the future because of what has happened in the past few weeks."

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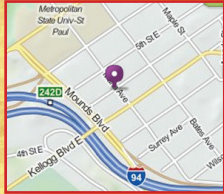
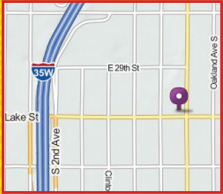


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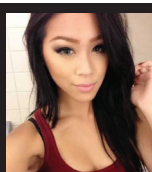
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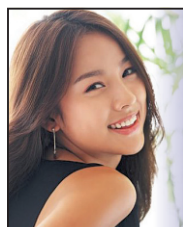
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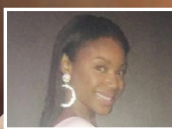
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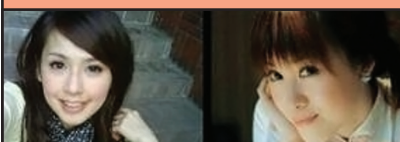
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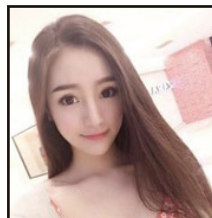
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